

December 2011

[Nebraska Department of Education](#)

Office of Multicultural/Native  
American Education

[www.education.ne.gov/mce](http://www.education.ne.gov/mce)

## Culture is Integral to the teaching of Social Studies

*Carol Rempp*

Last month I read a variety of articles disparaging the celebration of Native American Heritage month because as American Indian people why do we need or get just one month to celebrate our culture? Just prior to Native American Heritage Month we celebrate Hispanic Heritage month and coming up in February we will have Black History Month. There are also multiple other kinds of diversity celebration months that occur—Women's History Month, Greek American Heritage Month, Irish American Heritage Month, etc—not to mention the various single day celebrations. Why all this attention being paid to specific cultural heritage? Specific differences? Aren't we all just Americans?

*"Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity." National Council of Social Studies, 2010*

I bring up this concept now because as I listened to the various discussions on December 12 & 13 regarding the revision of Nebraska's Social Studies standards the incorporation of multicultural

education was foremost on my mind. This was especially true as I reviewed the materials from the National Council of Social Studies. They have established 10 Themes of

Social Studies around which they have developed a National Curriculum. The executive summary states:

*Through the study of culture and cultural diversity, learners understand how human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture, and appreciate the role of culture in shaping their lives and society, as well the lives and societies of others. In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum.*

Within the more specific information about each theme, culture is further explained:

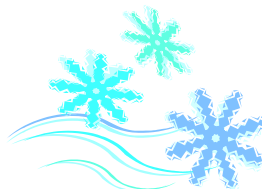
**Human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture.** The study of culture examines the socially transmitted beliefs, values, institutions, behaviors, traditions and way of life of a group of people; it also encompasses other cultural attributes and products, such as language, literature, music, arts and artifacts, and foods. Students come to understand that human cultures exhibit both similarities and differences, and they learn to see themselves both as individuals and as members of a particular culture that shares similarities with other cultural groups, but is also distinctive. In a multicultural, democratic society and globally connected world, students need to understand the multiple perspectives that derive from different cultural vantage points.

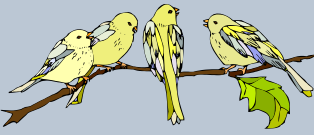
**Cultures are dynamic and change over time.** The study of culture prepares students to ask and answer questions such as: What is culture? What roles does culture play in

human and societal development? What are the common characteristics across cultures? How is unity developed within and among cultures? What is the role of diversity and how is it maintained within a culture? How do various aspects of culture such as belief systems, religious faith, or political ideals, influence other parts of a culture such as its institutions or literature, music, and art? How does culture change over time to accommodate different ideas, and beliefs? How does cultural diffusion occur within and across communities, regions, and nations? **Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place.** They will acquire knowledge and understanding of culture through multiple modes, including fiction and non-fiction, data analysis, meeting and conversing with peoples of divergent backgrounds, and completing research into the complexity of various cultural systems.

**In schools, this theme typically appears in units and courses dealing with geography, history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as multicultural topics across the curriculum.** Young learners can explore concepts of likenesses and differences among cultural groups through school subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, music, and art. In social studies, learners interact with class members and discover culturally-based likenesses and differences. They begin to identify the cultural basis for some celebrations and ways of life in their community and in examples from across the world. In the middle grades, students begin to explore and ask questions about the nature of various cultures, and the development of cultures across time and

Continue page 3





**"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."**

-Maya Angelou

## Defining the Line Between Fun and Bias

Submitted by [Carrie Craven](#) on November 30, 2011  
*Craven is a middle school English teacher in Louisiana.*  
 Teaching Tolerance  
<http://www.tolerance.org/blog/defining-line-between-fun-and-bias>

Man, am I just a total killjoy?

I struggled today with a decision whether or not to dress up for Spirit Week. Monday was Crazy Sock Day; Tuesday, crazy shoes. Yesterday was Crazy Tie Day. All of those I could absolutely get behind. But I wasn't so excited by the plan for Thursday—"Nerd Day."

I imagined kids with their pants hiked up, wearing fake glasses and imitating the speech patterns of some of their classmates with special needs.

I wondered if I was overreacting. Hypersensitive. Obnoxiously PC.

But then I thought about Andrew.

"I don't want to dress up tomorrow. I don't want to go back to being a nerd again," he told Ms. Denise. Andrew has autism. Ms. Denise told him it was all in fun, but he certainly didn't have to dress up if he didn't want to.

I went back and forth. The intention is all in fun, but the effects might not be fun—especially for kids who regularly wear their pants a little high, wear glasses or talk differently than most of their peers.

Even as I thought through potential outfits I could make, I was thrown back to my own elementary and junior-high experiences, when deciding what to wear caused moments of real stress, even anguish.

There was genuine fear that if your pants were too short, or too tight, too baggy, too old, too *anything*, you'd be called out by one of the popular kids and made to feel awful the rest of the day.

That is real to me. The heart flutters come back, even at 26, now quite at ease in my life and my wardrobe.

From the time I was a seventh-grader, I had to purchase my own clothes. I never had any brand-name items. Most of my clothes were from thrift shops. I wore sweatshirts from playing on the school volleyball and soccer teams nearly every day, because those were sure to be "safe." They would draw no questions or comments.

Combine the fact that I had the wrong clothes with my propensity for doing my work and earning good grades, and *voila*: I was an honest-to-goodness *nerd*.

The stereotype of "nerddom" is one that will forever frustrate the academic teacher in me. It is terrible that kids are ostracized if they enjoy reading, try hard at math or generally do well in school. To me it's one of the most counterproductive stereotypes out there.

So maybe I am a party-pooper. But I decided to dress normally today. If kids ask me, I will calmly explain that I still *am* a nerd. I still don't wear expensive clothes, and I still love to learn. And if that's what a nerd is, I'm cool with it.

## A Lesson Worth A Thousand Words

Blogger [Brenda Anfinson](#) gave her students recyclable cameras and had them take photos that answered the question, "What is my community?" Then she asked students to write about the things that interested them the most—family, friends, children and community. Something clicked. The personal connection helped these adult immigrant students overcome their fears about writing in English. (Idea from Teaching Tolerance)

*Editorial from page 1*

place. They learn to analyze specific aspects of culture, such as language and beliefs, and the influence of culture on human behavior. As students progress through high school, they can understand and use complex cultural concepts such as adaptation, assimilation, acculturation, diffusion, and dissonance that are drawn from anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines to explain how culture and cultural systems function.

Multicultural education as stated in Nebraska State Statute asks schools to integrate the contributions of African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians and Asian Americans with a focus on human relations. It states nothing about providing an adequate education for students of these diverse backgrounds in order to help them achieve to the best of their ability. We imply that in our school improvement plans when state that all students will achieve. If we take a closer look at the NCSS National Curriculum guidelines I would argue that Multicultural Education, while integrating contributions and focusing on human relations is a part of it that does not go far enough.

One of the best times to discuss the various cultures of our students is at times of the year such as the Winter Holidays that are approaching. Very often, mostly for good reason, within our communities and schools we celebrate Christmas. But what about the community that is more diverse? Do we still include such celebrations within our classrooms that may be offensive to other cultures? If so why? Are we so entrenched in our "traditions" that we can't see another's point of view?

With those statements I am not advocating for radical change. I'm as excited as some elementary school kids are to see what Santa is going to bring! However, I am also realist enough to know that there are many children in Nebraska who are going to celebrate Hanukah, Kwanza, or Winter Solstice instead. There is also a segment of the student population who will celebrate nothing at all. Don't they also deserve to

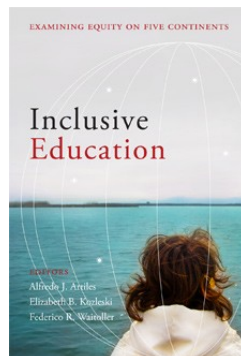
feel good about their family traditions?

Multicultural education does not promote anti-Americanism or Patriotism. In fact I believe that it helps us better understand the founding beliefs of this country. It helps us also to understand that although the United States of America was founded on principals that promoted life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for wealthy white men who wrote the Constitution, over time the Bill of Rights has gone on to expand these ideals for all members of society. Through our education system we have a responsibility to teach accurate history of all diverse groups not to impose guilt on the dominate society but rather to ensure that current and future generations will not repeat past societal ills. In order for our school systems to promote the importance of love of country and equality before the law understanding not only the triumphs of American History but also the price that was paid by many for those triumphs is one of the important components of Multicultural Education.

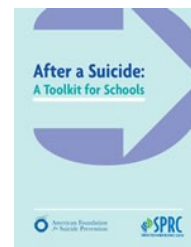
For more information about the National Council of Social Studies National Curriculum go to:

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>

For more information at about various celebrations go to: [http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic\\_relig/ethnic.html](http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic_relig/ethnic.html)



## Read the Multicultural Book Review



### Available free online

"After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools" is a tool developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Suicide Prevention Resource

Center. It is designed to help all schools be prepared to provide the best possible response to a tragedy that impacts individuals, families and the whole school.

The toolkit includes an overview of key considerations, general guidelines for action, do's and don'ts, templates, and sample materials, all in a format applicable to diverse populations and communities. It serves as a resource for schools facing real-time crises and, while designed specifically to address the aftermath of suicide, schools will find it useful following other deaths as well.

For a direct link to the Toolkit, please visit: <http://www.sprc.org/library/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf>

Despite the impressive growth of inclusive education around the world, questions and considerations about equity have been neglected. This book makes a major contribution to the field of inclusive education by analyzing equity concerns that have emerged from the implementation of inclusive education models in nine nations on five continents.

The authors examine how disparate approaches to inclusive education are mediated by the official and implicit goals of public education; by access to intellectual, human, and material resources; and by collective understanding of and educational responses to sociocultural differences. *Inclusive Education* provides critical reviews of research on this important education reform movement, as well as a refined theoretical understanding of the ways equity is addressed. It also offers lessons for future policy and research that are mindful of equity.

ISBN 978-1-61250-1115-4





The average person drinks 600 soda a year  
and we eat 35,000 cookies in our lifetime.

The Drum

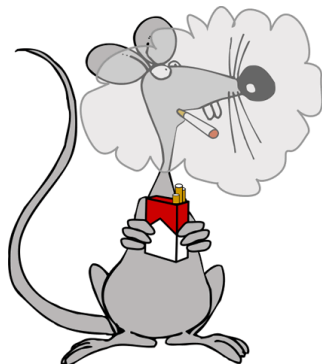
# Health WATCH

## New Columbia University Study in Mice Supported by HHS' NIH's NIDA Shows how Tobacco Products (Nicotine) Could Act as Gateway Drugs Opening the Door to Illicit Drug Use

A new study in mice shows how tobacco products could act as gateway drugs, opening the door to use of illicit drugs. Nicotine, the researchers found, makes the brain more susceptible to cocaine addiction. The finding suggests that lowering smoking rates in young people might help reduce cocaine abuse.

Scientists have long recognized that cigarettes and alcohol raise the risk for later use of illicit drugs like marijuana and cocaine. In a recent national survey, over 90% of adult cocaine users between the ages of 18 and 34 had smoked cigarettes before they began using cocaine. Researchers suspected that nicotine exposure might increase vulnerability to cocaine. However, no one had identified a biological mechanism. A team of scientists, led by Dr.

Eric Kandel at Columbia University and supported by NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), set out to investigate. In *Science Translational Medicine* on



November 2, 2011, the scientists reported that mice given nicotine in their drinking water for 7 days showed increased activity in response to cocaine. The animals also had changes in a brain signaling process called long-term potentiation.

Earlier research had shown that expression levels of a gene called *FosB* in the brain's striatum was linked to cocaine addiction. In the new study, investigators found that 7 days of nicotine administration caused a 61% increase in *FosB* expression. When given a dose of cocaine, these mice had an additional 74% increase in *FosB* expression compared to mice treated with cocaine alone. Reversing the order of the drugs didn't lead to a boost in *FosB* expression.

Past studies found that cocaine modifies DNA structure through a process called histone acetylation. The changes affect *FosB* expression. The researchers tested whether nicotine increases *FosB* expression in the striatum by altering DNA in a similar way. They found that 7 days of nicotine treatment significantly increases histone acetylation. Nicotine does this, they discovered, by inhibiting molecules that reverse acetylation. By manipulating these molecules through other methods, the researchers showed that they could enhance or inhibit the effects of cocaine. "Now that we have a mouse model of the actions of nicotine as a gateway drug, this will allow us to explore the molecular mechanisms by which alcohol and marijuana might act as gateway drugs," Kandel says. "In particular, we would be interested in knowing if there is a single, common mechanism for all gateway drugs or if each drug utilizes a distinct mechanism."

If nicotine works similarly in people, effective smoking cessation efforts might reduce the risk of addiction to cocaine and other illicit drugs.

### RELATED LINKS:

- Tobacco/Nicotine: [www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/nicotine.html](http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/nicotine.html)
- Cocaine: [www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/cocaine.htm](http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/cocaine.htm)
- NIH Study Examines Nicotine as a Gateway Drug (NIH Radio): <http://www.nih.gov/news/radio/nov2011/20111108nidagateway.htm>

SOURCE: The November 21, 2011, *NIH Research Matters*



Soda accounts for more calories than any other food or beverage group for teens ages 14– to 18. So over 24 states have banned sugary type drinks at school.





NEWS & RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE CREATION  
OF HEALTHIER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

## Healthy Schools Program

### Most Requested Resources of the Year

#### [Adventure to Fitness](#)

Age appropriate co-curricular episodes stream into classrooms, immersing students in an exciting world of fun and adventure.

#### [JAMmin' Minutes](#)

Weekly one-minute exercise routines for daily activity in the classroom.

#### [Step Up to Healthier School Fundraising](#)

Step by step guide to plan and implement the best fundraising practices.

#### [Taste Testing New Foods](#)



[www.Teachakidtofish.org](http://www.Teachakidtofish.org)

### Defend Against Diabetes

November was National Diabetes Awareness Month and Nebraska DHHS is launching a campaign called [Defend Against Diabetes](#) to educate people on their risk of developing diabetes. The new [website](#) has a link to a risk assessment test and lots of information on how to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes. There are some great giveaways like free cookbooks you can get by going on the site. [dhhs.ne.gov/PublicHealth/pages/diabetes\\_campaign.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/PublicHealth/pages/diabetes_campaign.aspx)

### Healthy Recipe - Hearty Potato Pancakes

These are hearty enough to be served as a main dish or as a side. They are good for any meal of the day and are very easy to make. You can serve these potato pancakes topped with apple sauce, sour cream, salsa, or any topping you desire... or just with a little salt and pepper. For a sweet twist, you can try these with sweet potatoes rather than regular potatoes!

To see this recipe, go to [http://www.teachakidtofish.org/resources/healthy\\_recipes/potatopancakes.html](http://www.teachakidtofish.org/resources/healthy_recipes/potatopancakes.html)

### Avoid Portion Distortion

As the holiday season approaches, the tradition of big hearty meals and wonderful desserts become part of our daily lives. We like this tradition as much as anyone else, but we also understand the need to keep those portions in check. Over the past 20 years, food portions have been getting larger and what we think of as a "normal" portion has changed dramatically. 20 years ago an average bagel was 3" in diameter and 140 calories. Today, an average bagel is 6" in diameter and 350 calories.

For tips on how you and your family can avoid portion distortion, go to [http://www.teachakidtofish.org/file\\_download/c39322b3-a0db-435f-9b2c-7a12fbd099ab](http://www.teachakidtofish.org/file_download/c39322b3-a0db-435f-9b2c-7a12fbd099ab)

*Teach a Kid to Fish website was a top health feature on CNN for December 13*



Remember the days of ice cold milk from one of those school drink stations? Especially chocolate on Friday's only!



### **Abusive Relationships: Get Help, Get Out: December 17**

"[Many teens] think an abusive relationship is usually a guy hitting a girl and just beating her," observes one of the many perceptive teens in this powerful program about abuse in adolescent relationships. What this young woman already knows, and viewers will soon discover, is that abuse comes in many different forms, and it can be hard to recognize at first. Teenagers of diverse backgrounds, including Native Americans, speak frankly about their experiences with dating violence. What make this program particularly unique are the stories from a male victim as well as siblings and friends. The program is organized into sections which first teach teens how to identify abuse and then answer these important questions: What happens next? Why not leave? When did you realize? How do you get out? Who can help? Where do you go from here? What would you tell others? This program raises awareness about the various resources available -- teachers, counselors, friends, parents -- and also encourages bystanders to speak out.

### **FIT FOR LIFE: EAT**

#### **SMART & EXERCISE, December 31(Guide)**

DVD w/Spanish subtitle, There's no question that many teens are overweight and don't get enough exercise. In fact, an estimated 15% are considered overweight or obese, with the numbers growing. At the other extreme, many teens are severely dieting to be "model thin," with eating disorders also on the rise. Even those who are within normal weight ranges often eat poorly during these critical growth years, affecting their energy and concentration levels now, and putting them at risk for future health problems. In this program, four diverse teen reporters point out the short- and long-term dangers of an unhealthy lifestyle, including low energy, difficulty concentrating, heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and diabetes. To help viewers make smart choices, they give easy-to-use information about reading labels to find the fat and sugar in food; exercising at home; eating well at fast food restaurants; changing family habits; and much more. They also visit a public school that makes nutrition and fitness part of the curriculum; plus a Boys & Girls Club where middle school teens learn nutrition basics and fun activi-

### **DIVORCE AND STEPFAMILIES: Breaking Apart/Coming Together (Guide) December 24--**

This unique program speaks to a diverse group of middle and high school teenagers who have been impacted by divorce, including those whose parents have recently separated or are in the process of divorce, and teens in stepfamilies. Teens and counselors explore solutions to problems such as custody arrangements, visitation, and building new relationships with single parents. In another support group, high school teens mentor children in grades 4-6 who are coping with similar situations. We also meet an interracial stepfamily and see how they successfully work at coming together. Through sharing personal experience and advice on how to deal with the confusing and unpleasant emotions that often accompany divorce, this program helps teens across the country who have had similar experiences. It also provides ways friends can offer support.

## The National At-Risk Education Network

Helping Kids Grow Wings to Fly

9th Annual Conference  
Panama City Beach, FL

**February 21-23, 2012**

[www.atriskeducation.net](http://www.atriskeducation.net)



Working with Families-Supporting Adults with Mental Illness

January 26, 2012 North Platte NE OR  
March 6, 2012 Country Inn & Suites, Lincoln NE

*This training will focus on common mental health disorders in adults. Topics will include mood disorders, anxiety disorders, stages of grief, safety considerations, and how to talk with families about mental health issues. Snacks will be provided.*

*Participants: EDN services coordinators, early childhood providers, Head Start staff, school psychologists, child care providers, PRT members, and Migrant recruiters and coordinators.*

Registration Link for North Platte:

<http://edn.ne.gov/registration/north-platte.php>

Registration Link for Lincoln:

<http://edn.ne.gov/registration/lincoln.php>



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



### POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

**To Manage Student Defiance and Bullying and Improve Academic Performance**

**Robert G. Harrington, Ph.D.**

**Workshop Presenter**

**Friday, January 13, 2012 Grand Island, NE**

**Friday, March 2, 2012 Lincoln, NE**

Flyer and registration fee structure available on our website  
[www.education.ne.gov/workshops\\_training.html](http://www.education.ne.gov/workshops_training.html)

## The HistoryMakers' 2nd Annual NEH Summer Institute for Teachers: African American Political History From Reconstruction to the Present

**2ND ANNUAL SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2012—FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 2012**

This ground-breaking Institute on African American Political History instructs Summer Scholars in oral history methodology and exposes them to some of the nation's leading scholars of African American politics and culture and the rich resources of *The HistoryMakers'* digital archive ([idvl.org/thehistorymakers](http://idvl.org/thehistorymakers)) and website ([www.thehistorymakers.com](http://www.thehistorymakers.com)).

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**"To be good is noble, but to teach others how to be good is nobler and less trouble."**

-Mark Twain (U.S. Writer 1835-1910)

CLASSROOM/SCHOOL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES	Award	Eligibility	Deadline
<a href="#">Fund for Teachers</a> The Fund for Teachers provides funds for direct grants to teachers to support summer learning opportunities of their own design <a href="http://www.fundforteachers.org/about-us.php">http://www.fundforteachers.org/about-us.php</a>	\$5,000 max	Teachers who work with students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12; 3 yrs min teaching experience, 50% of time in classroom	Varies by state (usually January)
<a href="#">Libri Foundation: Books for Children</a> The Libri Foundation Books for Children Grants donate new, quality, hardcover children's books for small, rural, public libraries across the country. <a href="http://www.librifoundation.org/apps.html">http://www.librifoundation.org/apps.html</a>	varies	Libraries in a rural area, limited operating budget, and an active children's department. The average total operating budget of a Books for Children grant recipient must be less than \$40,000	1/23/2012
TEACHER AWARD AND STIPENDS	Award	Eligibility	Deadline
<a href="#">Earthwatch Institute: Fellowships</a> The Earthwatch Institute offers educators fully-funded fellowships for hands-on learning with leading scientists doing field research and conservation on one of over 100 projects around the world. Maximum award: fully-funded fellowship. <a href="http://www.earthwatch.org/aboutus/education/edopp/">http://www.earthwatch.org/aboutus/education/edopp/</a>	See description	elementary, middle, and high school educators and administrators of any discipline	2/13/2012

Our website has a long list of tuition/scholarship information.  
<http://www.education.ne.gov/mce/Grants.html>



### **\$2,500 ESSAY CONTEST**

[Reconnecting the Circle](#) Essay Contest. This national high school student essay contest awards a **\$2,500 prize to 10 winning students!** The topic this year is: **"Why is reconnecting the circle with Native Americans important today?"** Deadline: January 20, 2012

<http://www.reconnectingthecircle.com/>

Newsletter Editor: Carol Rempp  
[carol.rempp@nebraska.gov](mailto:carol.rempp@nebraska.gov)

Co-editor, Layout/Design: Peg Kirby  
[peg.kirby@nebraska.gov](mailto:peg.kirby@nebraska.gov)



301 Centennial Mall South  
 Lincoln NE 68509

402 471 2960  
<http://www.education.ne.gov/mce>